

REMARKS

An Office Action was mailed on July 11, 2003. Claims 1-10 are pending in the present application.

Claims 1, 2, 4 and 7-10 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Otani et al. (U.S. Patent 5,956,449), while claims 5 and 6 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Otani et al. '449 in view of Smith (U.S. Patent 6,263,141). Responsive thereto, Applicant has amended the claims to clearly define the present invention over the prior art. Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Specifically, the claims have been amended so that it is clear that the guide rails provided on the modules of the present invention are guided by the guide rails of the neighboring modules such that the modules are connected to neighboring modules when the modules are inserted into the shelf. The expression "slide along" has been replaced with -- is guided by --, with support for the same clearly found in the originally-filed specification and drawings. Thus, an operation of mounting the modules into the shelf and an operation of connecting the modules can be performed in a single action.

Otani et al. '449 discloses a structure for mounting an optical circuit in which separate structural members are connected with hinges. In other words, hinges only have a function of connecting the modules and do not have a guiding function. Otani does not disclose a structure in which a guide rail on one of the modules is guided by a guide rail on a neighboring module. Therefore, an operation of mounting the modules into the shelf will be performed after an operation of connecting the module using the hinges and thus cannot be performed in a single operation.

Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that one skilled in the art would not consider the claimed invention to be obvious in view of the teachings of Otani et al. '449. Otani et al. simply fails to teach or reasonably suggest the totality of the structures as per amended claims 1-10 and for the reasons noted above.

Applicant also respectfully submits that one skilled in the art would not consider the claimed invention to be obvious in view of the teachings of Otani et al. '449 alone or in combination with Smith '141. With respect to amended claims 5-6, which are preliminarily

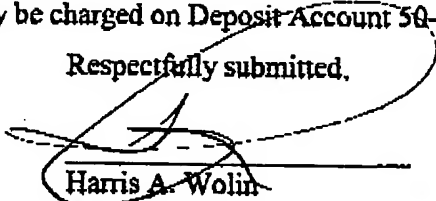
believed to be allowable through dependency for the reasons set forth above, it is clear that the fixing members are supported by the transverse rail so as to be movable along the transverse rail. With such a structure in which the positions of the fixing members can be changed along the rail, modules of various widths can be accommodated in the shelf. Smith, however, discloses a structure in which a rail (202) supports fixing members (216) at constant intervals, with an axis enabling rotation of the fixing members. Smith does not disclose that the fixing members are moved along or slid along the rail. Accordingly, the height of the trays will be restricted to the dimension between the neighboring fixing members. Thus, one skilled in the art would clearly not consider the claimed invention to be obvious in view of the combined teachings of Otani et al. and Smith.

With respect to the Examiner's recommendation to limit the device described in claims 1-8 to optical fibers, Applicant does not believe that such a limitation is necessary in view of the amendments and arguments presented herewith.

An earnest effort has been made to be fully responsive to the Examiner's objections. In view of the above amendments and remarks, it is believed that claims 1-10, consisting of independent claims 1, 9 and 10 and the claims dependent therefrom, are in condition for allowance. Passage of this case to allowance is earnestly solicited. However, if for any reason the Examiner should consider this application not to be in condition for allowance, the Examiner is respectfully requested to telephone the undersigned attorney at the number listed below to discuss possible further amendments to place the case in condition for allowance prior to issuing a further Action on the merits.

Any fee due with this paper may be charged on Deposit Account 50-1290.

Respectfully submitted,


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